



## **McAlester Army Ammunition Plant For Immediate Release**

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### **Commander addresses local American Legion post**

MCALESTER, Okla.-- More than 150 veterans and their families turned out September 28 to attend the American Legion's Post 79 annual Early Bird Dinner and hear remarks from guest speaker Col. Timothy Beckner, commander of the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant.

Col. Beckner commended those present for their sacrifices and service and went on to note the number of Oklahomans who have died serving their country in each war since World War I totaling 11,326 casualties. He also recognized the sacrifices of the attack on September 11 and reminded the veteran's that two Oklahomans died in the Pentagon attack, a Sailor from Sperry and a Soldier from Lawton.

He noted that the difference between the American military and the military of other nations throughout history is that, "Our warriors . . . did not fight to conquer the world, but to liberate it." In the audience were several World War II veterans including a former Marine who fought on Iwo Jima and a former Soldier who survived the Bataan death march.

Col. Beckner praised Post 79 and the national organization when he said, "After serving our country in uniform, many would be satisfied to say, 'My job is done.' Not the American Legion." He went on to recognize two national programs supported by the Legion: American Legion Baseball and Heroes to Hometowns.

The "Heroes" program is the only nationwide reintegration assistance service for wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, the ammunition plant has recently sponsored almost a dozen wounded warriors and plans to sponsor more, Col. Beckner said.

During his interaction with the local community, elected officials and businesses, Col. Beckner said he is asked what they can do to help the ammunition plant. His response included a four-fold approach: improve Highway 69 to a divided thoroughfare for everyone's safety and welfare; increase telecommunication capacity to McAlester and the surrounding areas; improve upon the east-west transportation routes and establish a local airfield that would be C-17 transportation plane capable.

Recognizing the tremendous sacrifices made by those in attendance, Col. Beckner said, "America can never repay you for your unselfish patriotism . . . we can only continue to express our utmost gratitude for your service, your sacrifices and your example of what makes America the greatest nation on this Earth."